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2021 – Between Peril and Potential: Human Rights Advocacy in the Wake of a Global Pandemic

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## Developing a Practice in Remote Sensing for Next-Generation Human Rights Researchers

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## **Next Generation Human Rights Researchers: Developing a Practice in Remote Sensing for Human Rights**

Remote sensing is increasingly recognized as an important tool for documenting human rights abuses. When used alongside interviews, case studies, surveys, forensic science, and other well-established research methods in human rights and humanitarian practice, remotely sensed data can effectively geolocate and establish chronologies for mass graves, forced displacement, destruction of cultural heritage sites, and other violations. But as a highly technical field of science that relies on ever-changing technologies, remote sensing and geospatial analysis are not readily accessible for human rights and humanitarian practitioners. The community of practice grew out of innovative work by practitioners at NGOs and specialized inter-governmental such as UNITAR/UNOSAT.

Now, with the increasing demand by human rights NGOs for geospatial evidence, there is an urgent need to expand the community of practitioners who have training in the appropriate and responsible use of geospatial technologies for human rights research and documentation. One piece of this will be opportunities for training new practitioners, such as a multi-disciplinary curriculum that prepares students across human rights, law, sciences, and engineering for work in this field. Places for those students to learn, such as university research centers focused on remote sensing and human rights, and experiential learning opportunities with NGOs also need to be created. These practitioners will then need places to do their work in NGOs, inter-governmental organizations, and development agencies.

After a brief introduction to the current state of practice and a pilot initiative at the University of Dayton, most of the session will be a facilitated discussion among session participants. What would a career pathway as a geospatial analyst for human rights look like? What educational opportunities are needed to support those careers? What experiential learning opportunities are available with human rights and humanitarian organizations? What is the role of funders and donors in developing this community of practice?